

6668

Tashmarie Lewis, Personal Care Assistant

Bill 6668

Human Services Committee, March 17, 2006

My name is Tashmarie Lewis. I'm a personal care assistant. I'm also a Certified Nurses Aide. My consumer used to be a resident of mine in the nursing home. He had a stroke and also has prostate cancer.

When he was ready to leave the nursing home and transitioning back into the home, his daughter Faith pulled me aside and said she really liked the way I cared for him and asked if I'd be willing to do PCA work for him at home. I was honored that she thought that well of my work and was happy to take on extra hours.

When I come in to help him, I do AM care- that's bathing him, brushing his teeth and other oral care, dressing him, helping him with his breakfast, taking his blood pressure, giving him his medication, and since he does not have full control over his bowels, I change him every two hours. We do a lot of recreation activities and games, or I'll exercise his hands and feet—he's bound to the wheelchair so he gets very stiff. He's a large man, so he needs a hooyer lift to be moved around. It's heavy work to do by yourself- in the nursing home we always do it with two people.

Like I said, I love the work—but it's exhausting! My last paycheck got messed up and Allied, the company that does our payroll, said they wouldn't be able to fix it for two weeks. Two more weeks without a paycheck. Already I work for very little—I will not work for free. But there is nothing that I can do about it and Faith doesn't have any control over it either, but I have a son and I need to take care of him! I'm picking up as many hours at my part time job in the nursing home, but I can't live like that.

Last Saturday I was sick and my shoulder was killing me, but there was no one else to cover for me. I didn't want to leave Faith or her father in that predicament so I worked. By Sunday I had to tell Faith I was afraid I was going to fall over if I came in, I felt so weak. What kind of a system is that? I can never get sick and I can't ever go on vacation? With the Council we could provide a better quality of care by putting in place a backup system to cover the consumers when their main PCAs are unavailable.

I would love to do this work full time and provide quality home care—that's why this Council means so much to me. I know that once we have a voice, we can all put our heads together we can make this system work better for everyone. We won't have that opportunity until we pass the quality workforce council bill.